



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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The International Treaty
ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

**Views, Experiences and Best Practices as an example of possible options for
the national implementation of Article 9 of the International Treaty**

Note by the Secretary

At its [second meeting](#) of the Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Farmers' Rights (AHTEG), the Expert Group agreed on a revised version of the [template](#) for collecting information on examples of national measures, best practices and lessons learned from the realization of Farmers' Rights

This document presents the updated information on best practices and measures of implementing Article 9 of the International Treaty submitted by Malawi on 1 August 2019.

The submission is presented in the form and language in which it was received.



Template for submission of

Measures, Best Practices and Lessons Learned from the Realization of Farmers' Rights as set out in Article 9 of the International Treaty

Basic information

- Title of measure/practice
Strengthening Local Farmers Seed Systems through Community Seed Banks in Malawi □
- Date of submission
31st July 2019
- Name(s) of country/countries in which the measure/practice is taking place
Malawi
- Responsible institution/organization (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s) and contact person)

Biodiversity Conservation Initiative (BCI)
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- Type of institution/organization (categories) **Non-Governmental Organization**
- Collaborating/supporting institutions/organizations/actors, if applicable (name, address, website (if applicable), e-mail address, telephone number(s)) **The Development Fund of Norway**

Description of the examples

Mandatory information:¹

Biodiversity Conservation Initiative entered into partnership with the Development Fund of Norway (DF) in 2013 to implement a Community Based Agrobiodiversity Management project (2013 – 2016). The project was extended from 2017 – 2020. DF provides the funding while BCI directly implement the project targeting 2500 smallholder farmers. The major objective is to Increase adaptive capacity to climate change among smallholder farmers in Malawi through strengthening local seed systems with community seed banking as a major focus. Core components of the work include; multiplication of locally adapted seed varieties such as finger millet, groundnuts, beans, green gram, sesame, sorghum, pearl millet and Bambara nut; maize varieties participatory variety selection; community seed banking on loan basis for enhanced

¹ This mandatory information is required in order for the measure/practice to be included in the Inventory.



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farmer access of the materials and loan schemes for sustainability and Capacity building programs on quality seed production, crop production practices and Seed policies including Farmers rights. Notable achievements of the work include the sustainable management of 4 Community seed Banks in Rumphi district.

- Brief history (including starting year), as appropriate

Biodiversity Conservation Initiative entered into partnership with the Development Fund of Norway (DF) in 2013 to implement a Community Based Agrobiodiversity Management project (2013 – 2016). The project was extended from 2017 – 2020. DF provides the funding while BCI directly implement the project targeting 2500 smallholder farmers

- Core components of the measure/practice (max 200 words)

BCI is promoting multiplication of locally adapted farmers' seed varieties of finger millet, groundnuts, beans, green gram, sesame, sorghum, pearl millet and Bambara nut. BCI also selected four locally adapted farmer varieties of maize through participatory variety selection. The selected materials were multiplied in farmers' fields. The multiplied materials were stored in Community Seed Banks for local community smallholder farmers to access the materials on loan basis agreement with the management committees of the Community Seed Banks. In order for the farmers to access quality seed, BCI trained the members of the CSBs in on-farm quality seed production, CSB practices and management, participatory variety selection, sustainable agronomy and local seed policies and Farmer' Rights. Farmers also share planting materials and raise awareness on Farmers' Rights through conducting field days and seed and food fairs in the communities. BCI is currently working with four (4) Community Seed Banks in Rumphi district in Malawi.

- Description of the context and the history of the measure/practice is taking place (political, legal and economic framework conditions for the measure/practice) (max 200 words)

Over 80 % of farmers in Malawi are smallholder farmers who depend on small scale farming for their livelihoods. Over 70 % of the smallholder farmers use farm saved seed. The government of Malawi introduced farm input subsidy program but target less farmers and is dominated by maize leaving out other important crops (grain legumes, sorghum, millet, vegetables) to farmers' dietary needs. The sustainability of the farm input subsidy program is also highly questionable. To address the challenge of seed shortages, BCI partnered with the Development Fund of Norway to strengthen local seed systems as a way of increasing availability of diverse and good quality seed among smallholder farmers with the view of increasing food and nutrition security and reduce susceptibility of smallholder farmers to climate change effects. The community seed banking practice was adopted owing to its successful implementation in other countries such as Zimbabwe and Nepal.

BCI is working with smallholder farmers to strengthen their local seed systems with backing of the ITPGRFA to which Malawi is a signatory.

- To which provision(s) of Article 9 of the International Treaty does this measure relate

Art. 9.1

Art. 9.2a



- Art. 9.2b
- Art. 9.2c
- Art. 9.3

Other information, if applicable

- Please indicate which category of the Inventory is most relevant for the proposed measure, and which other categories are also relevant (if any):

No.	Category	Most relevant ²	Also relevant ³
1	Recognition of local and indigenous communities', farmers' contributions to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, such as awards and recognition of custodian/guardian farmers		
2	Financial contributions to support farmers conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA such as contributions to benefit-sharing funds		
3	Approaches to encourage income-generating activities to support farmers' conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA		
4	Catalogues, registries and other forms of documentation of PGRFA and protection of traditional knowledge		
5	In-situ/on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, such as social and cultural measures, community biodiversity management and conservation sites		✓
6	Facilitation of farmers' access to a diversity of PGRFA through community seed banks ⁴ , seed networks and other measures improving farmers' choices of a wider diversity of PGRFA.	✓	
7	Participatory approaches to research on PGRFA, including characterization and evaluation, participatory plant breeding and variety selection		
8	Farmers' participation in decision-making at local, national and sub-regional, regional and international levels		
9	Training, capacity development and public awareness creation		✓
10	Legal measures for the implementation of Farmers' Rights, such as legislative measures related to PGRFA.		

² Please select only one category that is most relevant, under which the measure will be listed.

³ Please select one or several categories that may also be relevant (if applicable).

⁴ Including seed houses.



11	Other measures / practices		
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- In case you selected ‘other measures’, would you like to suggest a description of this measure, e.g. as a possible new category? _____
- Objective(s)

Increase adaptive capacity to climate change among smallholder farmers in Malawi

- Target group(s) and numbers of involved and affected farmers⁵

The intervention is targeting 2500 smallholder farmers.

- Location(s) and geographical outreach

The project is located in Rumphu district in Malawi. The impact Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) are Katowo, Bolero and Mhuju.

- Resources used for implementation of the measure/practice .How has the measure/practice affected the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture?
- Please describe the achievements of the measure/ practice so far (including quantification) (max 200 words)

The project is using four CSBs that were constructed by the Development Fund of Norway and relies on farmers’ fields to collect and multiply locally adapted seed. Project staff from BCI are directly involved in providing technical backstopping to the farmers. The project has increased access to good quality seed among smallholder farmers. Availability of Bambara nut seed has been increased. The project managed to bulk six tons of Bambara nut seed and this has resulted to increased production of bambara nut since seed is readily available. Through mass selection, four locally adapted farmer varieties were selected and improved. A local maize variety that matures in sixty days was also selected and improved through mass selection. Through increased production of locally adapted bean varieties (Nyauzembe, Jandalala, Sugar beans and Mzaza) and groundnuts (Chalimbana, Buyaya and Chailosi), the project has increased farmers’ incomes through selling of these materials from surplus production. In 2013/2014 season the project focused on building capacity of farmers to collect and multiply good quality seed. In that year a total of one ton of seed was produced that was further multiply in the 2014/2015 season producing five ton of seed. The growing season of 2015/2016 was the breakthrough season from which a total of thirty-eight tons of seed was produced. The project has benefited a total of 5000 smallholder farmers through access of seed and sharing knowledge. From 2017- 2018 farmers have continued maintaining the locally adapted varieties on-farm with two tons as the working sample as they continue to loan out seed to farmers on a 50% loan agreement. The materials that were not shared were sold to agro-dealers and estate owners to create space in the CSBs. These interventions have contributed to increase on-farm conservation of locally adapted farmer varieties.

- Other national level instruments that are linked to the measure/practice

⁵ Any classification, e.g. of the types of farmer addressed, may be country-specific.



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- Are you aware of any other international agreements or programs that are relevant for this measure/practice?

These include the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Convention on Biological Diversity, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to CBD and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing.

- Other issues you wish to address, that have not yet been covered, to describe the measure/practice

At each CSB, farmers manage a diversity of locally adapted crop varieties in a diversity block. Farmers collect and evaluate the collected materials in diversity blocks. The diversity block act as a school for farmers to share knowledge and best practices and learn new skills such seed selection on-farm while the crop is still in the field. The diversity block is also used as a research field to study introduced crop materials'. Prior to multiplication of seed, a four-cell analysis was conducted to collect information on the status of seeds of locally adapted materials and select materials for collection, conservation and multiplication and re-introduction. The samples of rare crop materials were replicated at the Malawi National Gene Bank for conservation.

Lessons learned

- Describe lessons learned which may be relevant for others who wish to do the same or similar measures/practices (max 250 words).

To effectively conserve crop genetic resources on-farm, capacity building of farmers is important in key areas of seed multiplication, collection and storage. Good storage facilities are very important to ensure that the quality of the stored materials is maintained since quality can deteriorate as a result of poor storage. Motivating farmers with economic gains is also important because farmers use their resources such as time and land need to have income at the end through selling of their materials in agriculture fairs.

- What challenges encountered along the way (if applicable) (max 200 words)

Limited storage space to bulk materials produced by farmers and store seeds belonging to individual farmers within the catchment communities wishing to store their seeds for the next planting season. Limited availability of land to observe recommended isolation distances for open pollinated crop varieties during mass selection. Government policies that neglect local farmer's seed systems and limited support from government institutions. Low crop prices and long distances to markets to sale surplus produce.

- What would you consider conditions for success, if others should seek to carry out such a measure or organize such an activity? (max 100 words)

Further information

- Link(s) to further information about the measure/practice



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<https://www.gfar.net/documents/capacity-building-material-realization-farmers-rights-malawi>

<http://www.aprebes.org/news/capacity-building-material-farmers-rights-malawi>